



WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS

State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development
Office of Economic Advisors

FOR NORTHWEST WISCONSIN COUNTIES

ASHLAND, BAYFIELD, BURNETT, DOUGLAS, IRON, PRICE, RUSK, SAWYER, TAYLOR, WASHBURN

March 2004

Unemployment Rates in February Below Previous Year

The unemployment rate for the northwest region increased in February to 8.8 percent, but that is well below the 9.4 percent rate of one year ago. Unemployment in the area remains much higher than in the state or nation. Four of the region's counties (Rusk, Bayfield, Ashland, Iron) were listed among the ten with the highest unemployment rates in the state.

While the national rate hovered at 6.0 percent and the Wisconsin

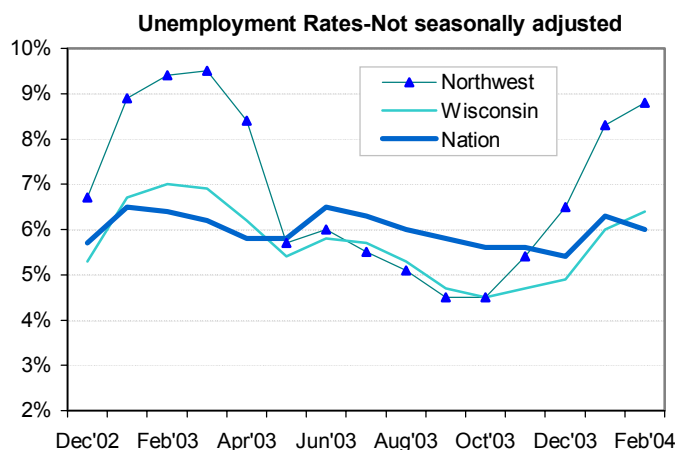
rate rose to 6.4 percent, not adjusted, the unemployment rate in Rusk County dropped to 11.0 percent in February, the fourth highest rate in the state. Rusk was one of only two counties in the state where the rate declined during the month. Price County with a 7.0 percent unemployment rate was one of only two counties that reported no change during the month.

The second largest increase in

the state occurred in Burnett County where the unemployment rate increased from 7.0 percent in January to 8.5 percent in February. In Washburn County the unemployment rate rose from 9.0 to 9.8 percent and in Sawyer the rate increased from 8.6 to 9.3 percent. The Taylor County unemployment rate rose from 7.9 percent to 8.5 percent while in Iron County the rate increased from 9.3 to 9.9 percent. In Bayfield the rate increased from 9.8 to 10.1 percent and in Ashland County it rose from 9.6 to 9.9 percent. In Douglas County the February unemployment rate was 7.1 percent up from 7.5 percent in January.

In Douglas County employers added jobs in February but that increase occurred as workers who were laid off for winter break returned to jobs in education.

That boosted the total number of jobs in the northwest region to over 67,000 in February. Beyond the increase in education, however, there was no job increase from employers in other industries and the job losses reported in February were not as deep as they have been



	Dec '02	Jan '03	Feb '03	Dec '03	Jan '04	Feb '04
Northwest	6.7%	8.9%	9.4%	6.5%	8.3%	8.8%
Wisconsin	5.3%	6.7%	7.0%	4.9%	6.0%	6.4%
Nation	5.7%	6.5%	6.4%	5.4%	6.3%	6.0%

Civilian Labor Force Estimates for Northwest Wisconsin counties: February 2004

	Ashland			Bayfield			Burnett			Douglas			Iron		
	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03
Labor force	8,334	8,337	8,216	7,688	7,689	7,518	8,001	7,947	7,769	23,989	23,809	23,640	3,388	3,400	3,489
Employed	7,508	7,537	7,314	6,909	6,935	6,731	7,324	7,390	7,141	22,193	22,109	21,894	3,051	3,083	3,106
Unemployed	826	800	902	779	754	787	677	557	628	1,796	1,700	1,746	337	317	383
% unemployed	9.9	9.6	11.0	10.1	9.8	10.5	8.5	7.0	8.1	7.5	7.1	7.4	9.9	9.3	11.0

	Price			Rusk			Sawyer			Taylor			Washburn		
	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03
Labor force	7,203	7,295	7,160	7,349	7,338	7,147	10,302	10,318	9,963	11,464	11,582	11,074	8,536	8,494	8,294
Employed	6,700	6,783	6,551	6,537	6,515	6,257	9,347	9,433	8,991	10,492	10,662	9,988	7,702	7,731	7,422
Unemployed	503	512	609	812	823	890	955	885	972	972	920	1,086	834	763	872
% unemployed	7.0	7.0	8.5	11.0	11.2	12.5	9.3	8.6	9.8	8.5	7.9	9.8	9.8	9.0	10.5

* not seasonally adjusted

Industry Employment Estimates for Northwest Wisconsin: Current month - February 2004

(Employment in thousands)	Ashland			Bayfield			Burnett			Douglas			Iron		
	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03
Total Nonfarm	8.4	8.4	8.4	3.6	3.7	3.6	4.8	4.8	4.8	17.5	17.3	17.4	2.2	2.2	2.3
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.2
Manufacturing	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.1	0.3	0.3	0.3
Trade	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	0.4	0.4	0.4
Transportation & Utilities	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	2.1	2.1	2.0	0.1	0.1	0.0
Financial Activities	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1
Education & Health Services	1.7	1.7	1.7	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.6	0.6	2.0	2.0	1.9	0.3	0.3	0.3
Leisure & Hospitality	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.5	2.1	2.1	2.0	0.4	0.4	0.4
Info, Prof/Bus.Srv, Othr Srv.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	2.9	2.9	2.9	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total Government	2.0	2.0	2.1	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	3.2	2.9	3.2	0.4	0.4	0.4

	Price			Rusk			Sawyer			Taylor			Washburn		
	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03
Total Nonfarm	6.4	6.4	6.4	5.6	5.6	5.6	3.7	3.7	6.4	9.0	9.1	8.8	5.9	5.9	5.8
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Manufacturing	2.3	2.3	2.3	1.9	1.9	1.9	0.4	0.4	0.4	2.9	2.9	2.8	0.9	0.9	1.0
Trade	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.3	0.9	1.0	0.9
Transportation & Utilities	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2
Financial Activities	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Education & Health Services	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8
Leisure & Hospitality	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6
Info, Prof/Bus.Srv, Othr Srv.	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.1	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total Government	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.2	2.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.4	1.4

Current month preliminary. Estimates based on March 2003 benchmark. Summing from unrounded numbers.

in the last two years.

In the next few months employers will again resume hiring for summer jobs and projects. In the last two years employers have added 3,000-3,500 jobs to the region's economy between January and May. Many of those jobs are in construction but most of them are in the service-producing industries. Manufacturing employers generally hold off until May or June to add workers.

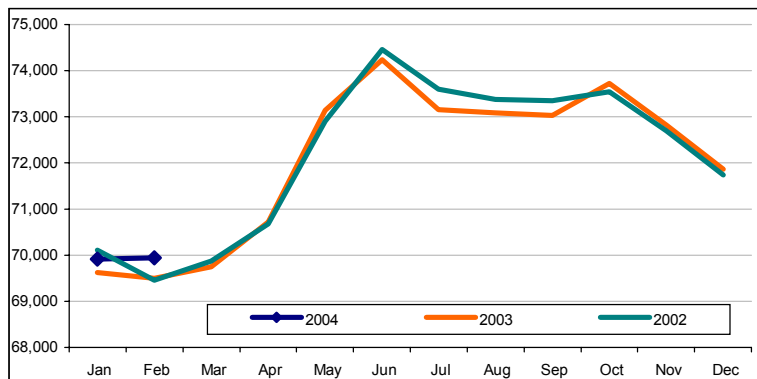
Another sign that spring is just around the corner is

the decline in residents filing claims for unemployment compensation benefits. The number of

claims filed for compensation are lower than for comparable weeks in the last two years. That number began to decline in mid-February and by mid-March there were nearly 600 fewer claims filed this year than one year ago.

An employment picture in February that was not quite as dreary as in recent years and a lower unemployment claim load offers a more positive glimpse into the coming months.

Total Nonfarm Employment in Northwest



Assistance sought from multiple worksite employers

Employers with operations in multiple locations (work sites) in Wisconsin are requested to complete a Multiple Worksite Report (MWR), PLEASE. Only affected employers are contacted and asked to complete the MWR during the first calendar quarter. All individual responses are kept confidential but collectively this valuable information is used: by business planners in economic development, forecasting, and wage analysis; by legislators in allocating dollars; and by individuals in making career decisions.

The department thanks the 3,300 employers who currently participate by reporting employment at over 25,000 work sites.

For more information contact
Deb Holt at 608.266.5321

Find the most current Labor Market Information at: WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI

Direct questions and comments to: **Beverly Gehrke, Labor Market Analyst**
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